



# LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

75th Year

9 APRIL 1976

3.865

The Ancient World 444

Archaeology 411

Biography 412

Fiction 413

Genealogy & History 414

Medieval Studies 426

Theatre 415

Australian Themes: 410,  
417-8, 420, 422-4, 431-3,  
436-43, 445

H. B. King: *Scratch a Sun* 446  
G. Blainey: *Triumph of the*  
*Nomad* 441  
J. Wright: *Hart* 413  
R. E. Brinsford: *Building a*  
*Terrace* 443  
R. Bruce-Mitford: *The Sutton Hoo*  
*Ship Burial* 411  
H. Bull (Editor): *Asia and the*  
*Western Pacific* 438  
G. Duran: *Kenneth Stow* 422  
K. O. L. Burridge: *Encountering*  
*Aborigines: A Case Study* 440  
D. Campbell: *Deaths and Proty*  
*Cousins* 431  
C. Clutton and G. Daniels: *Clacks*  
*and Votches* 416  
R. M. Crawford: *A Bit of a Rebel*  
*of Australia* 410  
F. Crowley (Editor): *A New History*  
*of Australia* 410  
D. Dahl and B. Kehoe: *Young Judy*  
*W. Davidson: Peter Dillon of*  
*Poukawa* 427  
S. Ensel, M. Mackenzie and M.  
Tehani: *Women and Society* 427  
F. W. Eschmann: *Luther Smith J.C.*  
*W. Evans (Editor): Diary of a Welsh*  
*Survivor 1869-1894* 439  
J. M. Ferrante: *Woman as Image in*  
*Medieval Literature* 426  
R. Gullat: *Revolutionaries and Re-*  
*formists* 442  
R. Gray: *Creekwater Journal* 431  
R. Groves: *The Cambridge Co-*  
*prolute Mining Rush* 428  
R. Hall: *Selected Poems* 431  
M. A. Hewson: *Giles of Rome and*  
*the Medieval Theory of Concep-*  
*tion* 426

T. Holme: *Prim's Daughter* 414  
A. D. Hope: *Julith Weigh* 432  
W. J. Hudson (Editor): *Australia's*  
*New Guinea Question* 442  
A. Inskip: *The White Women's Pro-*  
*tection Ordinance* 440  
K. Inglis: *The Australian Colonists*  
*J. Larkins and B. Howard: Great*  
*Australian Book of Nostalgia* 418  
J. S. Levi and G. F. J. Bergman:  
*Australian Genesis* 418  
R. Lockwood: *Black Aruahu* 442  
N. MacAulish: *Nietzsche in Aus-*  
*tralia* 423  
J. McAnley: *A Map of Australian*  
*Verse* 422  
R. McDonald: *Air Ship* 443  
D. Maibou: *Neighbours in a Thicket*  
*R. T. Marewedge (Editor): The*  
*Role of Woman in the Middle*  
*Ages* 426  
H. Müller: *Die Umsiedlerin oder*  
*das Leben auf dem Lande* 415  
R. G. Neale (Editor): *Documents on*  
*Australian Foreign Policy 1937-49*  
*G. Page: Smalltown Memorials* 443  
Plato: *Philebus* 444  
H. Porter: *In an Australian Country*  
*Groveyard* 443  
W. K. Pritchett: *The Greek State of*  
*War* 444  
A. E. Quigley: *The Pieter Problem*  
*W. S. Ramson (Editor): The Aus-*  
*tralian Experience* 436  
S. Regan: *Rupert Murdoch* 412  
F. Roberts: *William Deane* 431  
D. Rowthorn: *Selected Poems* 443  
E. Ryan and A. Conlon: *Gentle*  
*Invasions* 427

E. Salter: *The Lost Impressions* 427  
L. Santercock: *Cities for Sale* 425  
T. W. Shapcott: *Contemporary Am-*  
*erican and Australian Poetry* 425  
T. W. Shapcott: *Shahytown Calen-*  
*dur* 425  
B. Smith (Editor): *Documentary on*  
*Art and Taste in Australia, The*  
*Antipolean Manifesto* 425  
D. Stewart: *Norman Lindsay* 425  
L. Sirauss: *The Argument and the*  
*Action of Plato's Laws* 425  
D. Thomson: *Birds in Country* 425  
R. Tipping: *Domestic Hardcore* 425  
A. Wagner: *Podigres and Progress*  
*Francis Webb (1925-1973)* 425  
K. Wellesley: *The Long Year A.D. 88*  
*R. Windeler: Shirley Temple* 425  
J. Wright: *Because I Was Invited* 425

## FICTION

M. Beil: *Contemporary Portraits and*  
*other Stories* 445  
P. Carey: *The Fat Man in History* 445  
B. Galden: *Goodbye to Yesterday* 445  
K. Hemmings: *Here we Are* 445  
X. Herbert: *Poor Fellow My*  
*Country* 445  
A. Kefau: *The First Journey* 445  
R. Kreusmann: *From another Shore*  
*D. Malouf: Johnno* 445  
A. Marshall: *Short Stories* 445  
E. G. Pargault: *Spill* 445  
C. Potok: *In the Beginning* 445  
J. Post: *My Brother's Killer* 445  
I. B. Singer: *Fanshwa* 445  
C. Slaughter: *The Story of the*  
*Weasel* 445  
J. Wambaugh: *The Chairboys* 445  
M. Wilding: *The Short Story Em-*  
*bassy* 445

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60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74,  
76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90,  
92, 94, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104,  
106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116,  
118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 128,  
130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140,  
142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152,  
154, 156, 158, 160, 162, 164,  
166, 168, 170, 172, 174, 176,  
178, 180, 182, 184, 186, 188,  
190, 192, 194, 196, 198, 200,  
202, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212,  
214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 224,  
226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236,  
238, 240, 242, 244, 246, 248,  
250, 252, 254, 256, 258, 260,  
262, 264, 266, 268, 270, 272,  
274, 276, 278, 280, 282, 284,  
286, 288, 290, 292, 294, 296,  
298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 308,  
310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320,  
322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332,  
334, 336, 338, 340, 342, 344,  
346, 348, 350, 352, 354, 356,  
358, 360, 362, 364, 366, 368,  
370, 372, 374, 376, 378, 380,  
382, 384, 386, 388, 390, 392,  
394, 396, 398, 400, 402, 404,  
406, 408, 410, 412, 414, 416,  
418, 420, 422, 424, 426, 428,  
430, 432, 434, 436, 438, 440,  
442, 444, 446, 448, 450, 452,  
454, 456, 458, 460, 462, 464,  
466, 468, 470, 472, 474, 476,  
478, 480, 482, 484, 486, 488,  
490, 492, 494, 496, 498, 500,  
502, 504, 506, 508, 510, 512,  
514, 516, 518, 520, 522, 524,  
526, 528, 530, 532, 534, 536,  
538, 540, 542, 544, 546, 548,  
550, 552, 554, 556, 558, 560,  
562, 564, 566, 568, 570, 572,  
574, 576, 578, 580, 582, 584,  
586, 588, 590, 592, 594, 596,  
598, 600, 602, 604, 606, 608,  
610, 612, 614, 616, 618, 620,  
622, 624, 626, 628, 630, 632,  
634, 636, 638, 640, 642, 644,  
646, 648, 650, 652, 654, 656,  
658, 660, 662, 664, 666, 668,  
670, 672, 674, 676, 678, 680,  
682, 684, 686, 688, 690, 692,  
694, 696, 698, 700, 702, 704,  
706, 708, 710, 712, 714, 716,  
718, 720, 722, 724, 726, 728,  
730, 732, 734, 736, 738, 740,  
742, 744, 746, 748, 750, 752,  
754, 756, 758, 760, 762, 764,  
766, 768, 770, 772, 774, 776,  
778, 780, 782, 784, 786, 788,  
790, 792, 794, 796, 798, 800,  
802, 804, 806, 808, 810, 812,  
814, 816, 818, 820, 822, 824,  
826, 828, 830, 832, 834, 836,  
838, 840, 842, 844, 846, 848,  
850, 852, 854, 856, 858, 860,  
862, 864, 866, 868, 870, 872,  
874, 876, 878, 880, 882, 884,  
886, 888, 890, 892, 894, 896,  
898, 900, 902, 904, 906, 908,  
910, 912, 914, 916, 918, 920,  
922, 924, 926, 928, 930, 932,  
934, 936, 938, 940, 942, 944,  
946, 948, 950, 952, 954, 956,  
958, 960, 962, 964, 966, 968,  
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*Shakespearean Drama*, 1939; a fine collection  
of de luxe issues of the books illustrated by Arthur  
Rackham; Long's *Daphnis and Chloe*, illustrated by  
Ricketts and Shannon, 1931; *Wadsworth's The*  
*Black Country*, one of the woodcut, 1920,  
and others, illustrated by Arthur Rackham,  
Bewick, Cruik, Oare, Dulac, Russell Flint, Gill,  
Gougeron, Owen Jones, Jessie M. King,











P. D. James











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## Jewish studies: a major rescue operation

By David Patterson

Writing in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* of February 26, 1976, John Holloway of Cambridge gloomily predicts the demise of English studies in this country because of shrinking resources and rising costs. "Perhaps the worst problem," he explains, "is about books. On a very rough estimate, academic books are at present annually increasing in price not far short of ten times as fast as student grants or net academic salaries. Within a few years, departments may be teaching major texts (I mention Wordsworth, Dickens, Conrad, Lawrence...) to large student bodies and none of whom can afford the book."

But there is worse to come. "Never buy criticism or sell a text," Professor Holloway warns us. "Never throw away notes!" In 10 or 20 years, when students have almost no scholarly books to read, they will begin to want information once again, but by then you yourself may find you cannot return to the library because they have fallen apart and not been replaced."

So much for English studies. In many branches of Hebrew and Jewish studies an even graver situation has existed for more than thirty years. Shortly after my first university appointment in 1953 I delivered a series of lectures on the growth of modern Hebrew literature from the French Revolution to the First World War. The realization soon dawned that I was talking about books which my students could not merely not obtain but which they were unlikely ever to see at all. Works by Hebrew authors corresponding to Wordsworth, Dickens, Conrad, Lawrence (I refer not to literary merit but to their relative importance in the history of Hebrew literature) often existed only in a handful of copies throughout the world. This was the case not only in the realms of poetry and fiction, I applied equally to the whole range of periodical literature which plays a central role in the development of modern Hebrew literature.

Published originally in small editions for a scattered readership, the natural wastage of this material was made more severe by migration, the ravages of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and the wholesale destruction of Jews and of all things Jewish by the Nazis during the Second World War. By 1945 many of the "classics" of modern Hebrew literature were virtually unavailable even to scholars working in the field.

In many instances, moreover, and particularly in the case of newspapers and periodicals, rarity is matched only by fragility. Printed on paper which is rapidly crumbling, many works of prime importance are in real danger of physical disintegration. So much so, that many librarians are loath to subject the works to normal use, which would only accelerate the process of fragmentation. Elsewhere resort is made to draconian methods. In the New York Public Library on 42nd Street, for example, the twelve volumes of *Ha-Shahar*, one of the most important Hebrew journals of the nineteenth century and very rare, are kept in a vault and are only consulted by appointment. Even once consulted, they are not to be read, they are to be looked at.

The real dimension of the dangers threatening nineteenth-century Hebrew literature passed largely unnoticed for many years because the main body of students interested in the field had been trained at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where a very wide range of the books and periodicals under consideration were housed in the reading rooms of the library on open shelves. As a result, students were conscious of the extreme rarity of much of the material so easily accessible to them, and were surprised, and often aggrieved, to find that a large part of it was virtually unavailable elsewhere.

The same books, however, which were available in Jerusalem, were not available in London, and this was a major problem for the British Association for Jewish Studies, which was founded in 1964. The Association's first project was to acquire a copy of each of the books and periodicals under consideration, and to make them available to its members.

branches of Jewish studies which are seriously hampered for lack of available texts. For more than a decade sporadic attempts have been made to reprint important works, frequently by photo-offset, for the benefit of the growing number of individual scholars and university departments concerned with Jewish studies. But in spite of valiant efforts, the high cost of reprinting and a severe curtailment of library funds have combined to limit the effectiveness of all such ventures. However praiseworthy, reprint projects have touched only the fringe of the problem.

Following on many years of grave concern over this increasingly urgent problem, and involvement in a number of abortive attempts to solve it, we are surprised and delighted when Hansel de Mink of the Inter Documentation Company approached me a little over a year ago with the suggestion of a Jewish Studies Microfilm Project which would make some 10,000 volumes available on microfilm.

Long disenchanted with the use of microfilm, in which medium I had over the years reluctantly read thousands of pages of Hebrew text, I became an immediate convert to the use of microfiche. The technique enables more than a hundred pages of text to occupy a fiche no larger than a postcard. The fiche is merely dropped into the slot of a reading machine (which is small, light and portable) and the pages can be projected onto a desk or a wall in easily readable form. Thus the cumbersome, time-consuming process involved in using microfilm, especially when different works on different microfiches have to be compared, is obviated. Storage requires less space, and the space necessary for an equivalent number of books, while the price is considerably less than one half the cost of a printed book. Moreover, the modest number of copies which must be sold to make a work in microfiche financially viable permits the reproduction of a wide range of important books which could not otherwise meet republishing costs.

The editing of the Jewish Studies Microfilm Project has been undertaken by members of the faculty of the Oxford Centre for Jewish Studies, together with a distinguished international panel of contributors. Resources have been made to the rich collections of Jewish materials in the National and University Library of Jerusalem, the Rosenthal collection in Amsterdam, the VIVO Library in New York, the Bodleian Library,

Oxford, and many others. The work is already well advanced, and the entire project is scheduled for completion within three years.

The plan embraces ten principal sections, in each of which lists of rare and important works have been submitted by experts in the various fields. Section 1 consists of carefully selected works of biblical scholarship. Section 2 is devoted to Jewish history under twelve sub-headings: Eastern Europe, France, Germany, Islamic countries, Italy, the Netherlands, Palestine, sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, Palestine twentieth century and Israel, Russia and the Soviet Union, Spain and Portugal, antisemitism and the history of Zionism. It is hoped to augment this section with lists devoted to Anglo-Jewish and American-Jewish history.

Section 3 is concerned with philosophy and religion under five headings: Bible research, medieval philosophy, Kabbalah and Hasidism. Section 4 comprises languages and literature in three divisions: Semitic linguistics and comparative grammar, Hebrew literature both medieval and modern, and Yiddish language and literature. The latter includes a plan to make available a complete corpus of all Yiddish printed books up to 1650. Section 5 is devoted to archeology, including selected rare scrolls and manuscripts, music, musicology and the arts. Section 7 is devoted to archival materials, including state archives, central Zionist archives and the archives of Yehoshua Vaisman devoted to the social and political sciences, including Israeli government publications and the Jewish labour movement. Section 9 is concerned with periodicals and newspapers in Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages. An attempt is being made to compile a comprehensive list of as many as 1,000 periodicals, of which only scattered collections exist at present. Finally, Section 10 embraces collected papers, journals and memorial volumes. It is hoped that further sections will be added in due course.

In making such a range of material available for libraries, individual scholars and students, the Inter Documentation Company and the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies hope that it will be possible to breathe fresh life into many branches of Jewish learning and rescue it from an even greater threat than the sadly predicted for English studies.

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## Projects and prospects

By Peter A. Thomas

Virtually every academic discipline is covered by micropublishing; but historians are probably served best of all.

For the medievalist, World of All Publications, London, have issued on 35mm roll film some of the outstanding manuscripts in the library in the Lambeth Palace Library. The library is extremely rich in early manuscripts of the ninth to thirteenth centuries; these were assembled from monastic libraries, about fifty years after Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. Many of the manuscripts are beautiful illuminated and some include the *MacDermid Gospels*, the *Book of the Hours* and *St. Albans Chronicle*, are reproduced on colour microfilm.

Manuscripts of a later period have been microfilmed by R.I. Microfilm of East Ardsley in West Yorkshire. Among many interesting collections this publisher offers the *Manuscript Material from the Library and Offices of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall*. This account book of the first Earl of Leicester—better known as Coke of Norfolk—has been microfilmed, as also have the papers of his ancestor Chief Justice Edward Coke, who prosecuted both Sir Walter Raleigh and Guy Fawkes. Also from R.I. Microfilm comes *British Records Relating to America*, published in conjunction with the British Association for American Studies.

In the days when printing and paper were much cheaper many historical documents were published by conventional methods. County record societies, for example, have been making local materials available for many years, but often the older volumes are out of print and fetch high prices at the secondhand market. Local historians, both amateur and professional, will be glad to note that Chadwyck-Healey of Cambridge have republished the collections of several record societies on microfiche. The oldest records so far available are those of the Cheshire Society, which in 1844 published *Travels in Cheshire, the United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1634-1635*, by Sir William Brereton. All the microfiches in this series may be purchased separately or as sets. Chadwyck-Healey have also published, on 35mm roll film, *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons 1715-1801*. These reports cover a wide range of subjects and provide an important source of information on the activities of the Post Office Company. Although printed, the reports were never published in the microform series, and this microform release is the first since their original publication between 1803 and 1806.

Historians of the twentieth century will find much of value in the microfilm list of the Harvester Press. One of their microfiche projects covers the major part of the national archives of the British Labour Party at Transport House. Already available on microfiche is the National Executive Committee Minutes of the British Labour Party. Parallel with this series are the Archives of the British Trades Union Congress, the Archives of the British Congress,

the Archives of the Congress of the British Liberal Party.

Investors have also chosen microfiche as the medium for their Primary Social Sources series. In preparing the series, the output of pressure groups and social movements is acquired, catalogued, indexed and microfilmed. The literature of women's liberation and gay rights has been collected and micropublished as *Sexual Politics in Britain*. Besides such obvious inclusions as *Women's Voice*, *Spore Rib*, and *Gay News*, this microfiche collection also makes readily available to the social historian such publications as *Enough*, the journal of the Bristol Women's Liberation Group, and *Sappho*, a homosexual magazine for women. Also available on microfiche is *Private Eye*, part of Harvester's collection entitled *The Underground and Alternative Press in Britain*, which also includes such unfamilar titles as *Chin Chin*, *Sam Flower*, *Dwarf News*, and *Titus Groen*.

Stillography, or the study of historic seals, is another area which provides opportunities for micropublishing. Last year Oxford Microform Publications published *A Catalogue of Seals in the University of Glasgow*, using the microfiche-book format. An introductory text and a series of envelopes for holding microfiche are bound together into a handy-size booklet. The cost of printing a specialist book of this kind by conventional means would have been prohibitive because of the many photographic illustrations.

Besides developing microfiche books, some of which can contain up to sixty microfiche and forty printed pages, Oxford Microform Publications are rapidly building up a list of out-of-print books. Among the titles of interest to the historian are *Baruch's Factor in Germany*, *History of Frowen's Bibliography of Historical Writings 1940-1945*, and *Ogilvie's The King's Government and the Common Law*. Oxford University Press are also offering microfiche editions of selected out-of-print books from its backlist, including sixty titles of historical studies. Some of these books, such as *Gopal's The Vice-Imperies of Lord Irwin*, have only been out of print for a year or so, while others, like *Kingard's Prophecy and Prophecy in Fifteenth Century England*, have not been available for more than thirty years.

Also in the Oxford microfiche list are thirty-five out-of-print works of literary criticism. Micropublishing also serves the literary scholar by making readily available authors' original manuscripts on film. EP Microform, for example, have produced on sixteen rolls of 35mm microfilm *The Original Manuscripts and Papers of Thomas Hardy*, including most of the manuscripts preserved by the Dorset County Museum and further manuscripts held in the British Museum and other collections. Publishers have of course had an important role to play in the development of literature and their archives make fascinating reading. The changing taste of the Victorian reading public can be gauged by

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